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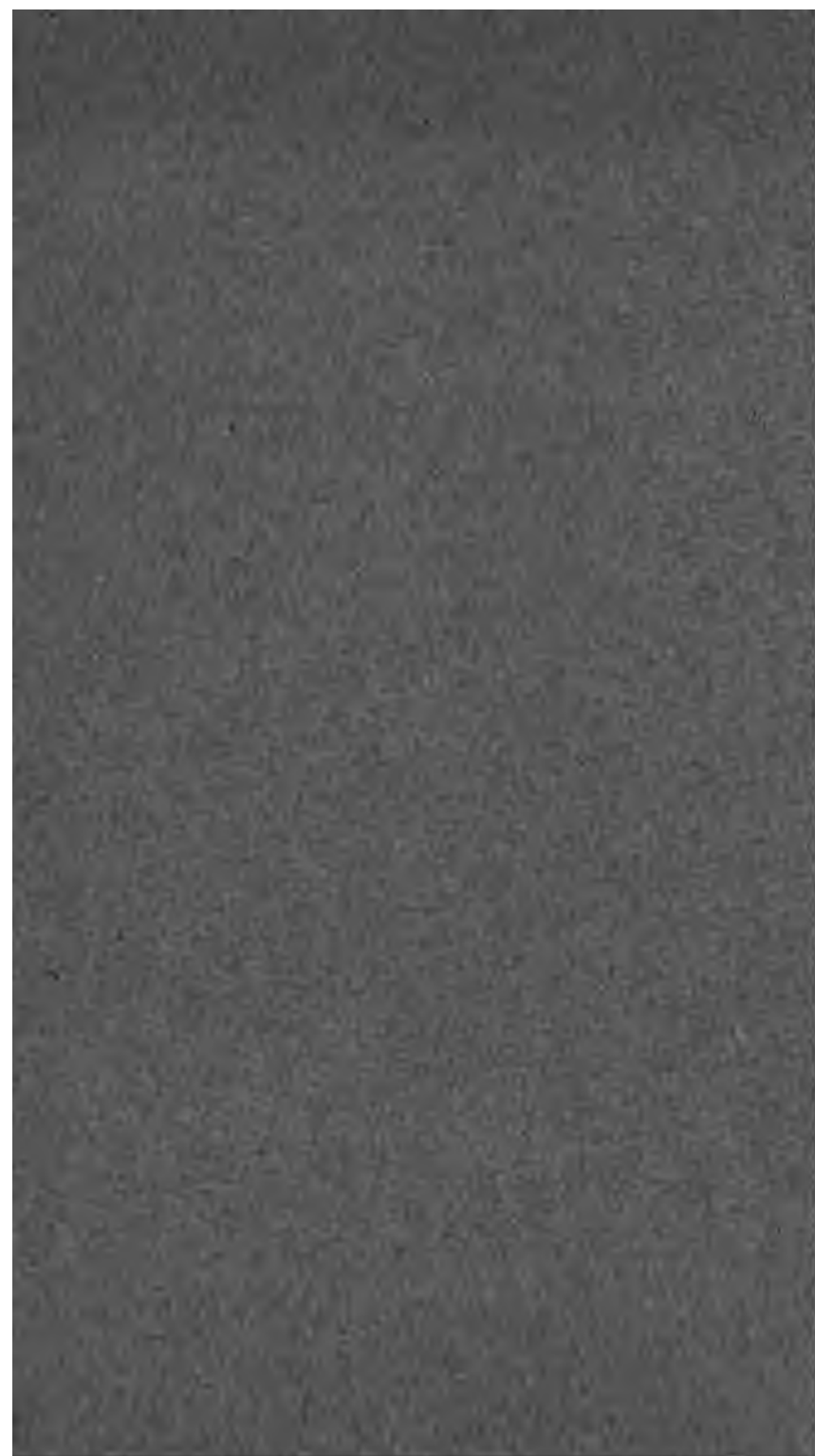
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*Raymond
New Hampshire
Fifty Years Ago*



An address by David H. Brown

1901



RAYMOND, NEW HAMPSHIRE FIFTY YEARS AGO

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AN ADDRESS AT THE "OLD HOME WEEK CELEBRATION"
RAYMOND, N. H., AUGUST 20, 1901

BY
DAVID H. BROWN
OF WEST MEDFORD, MASS.

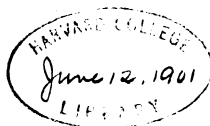


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RAYMOND, NEW HAMPSHIRE, FIFTY YEARS AGO.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN: It was a happy suggestion of Governor Rollins for the citizens of the towns of New Hampshire to invite the absent sons and daughters to revisit the old homes, so that they might renew old associations and recall former days. It is delightful to be here to-day and meet old friends, some of whom I have not seen for a generation. I am glad to accept your generous hospitality, and I am sure "Old Home Week" will be remembered as red-letter days in the history of the town.

It is not strange that we who have strayed away from the old homes should find it delightful to revisit the old town. We love the hills and valleys, the brooks and meadows, on which we first looked, and where we roamed when children. We enjoy climbing the same old rocks, sitting under the same trees, on the same grassy banks, and in the same rooms of the dear old houses where the happy years of childhood were passed. We love the good old town, its people, and its history.

Mr. President, I have been invited to give some reminiscences of earlier days, and I shall undertake to tell you about "Raymond fifty years ago," or rather fifty-five years ago, at the time of the Mexican War, in 1846, in my early boyhood.

James K. Polk was then President of the United States, Jared W. Williams was Governor of New Hampshire, Queen Victoria had begun her illustrious career, and had been seven years on the throne, Louis Philippe was King of France, and Nicholas, the great-grandfather of the present Nicholas, was the Czar of all the Russias. The population of the United States numbered 17,000,000.

In the *New Hampshire Gazette* of 1848, Raymond was mentioned only as a farming town, but some other industries might have been noted; viz., the production of thousands of bushels of charcoal annually, and the manufacture of barrels and carriages that were sent to other markets. In the forties there was a hand-loom in nearly every house. The women of the household carded and spun the wool, and wove it into cloth for home use and for sale. This home industry had come down from the time of the early days of New England. It was a great relief to the tired housekeepers when the yearly stock of wool could be exchanged at Folsom's Mill, in West Epping, for an equivalent in woolen cloth or flannel for family use.

The manufacture of palm-leaf hats must not be overlooked. Nearly all the young people engaged in this work, and in this way added much to the family income. For an active boy it was monotonous and disagreeable work, but with nimble fingers he could do his regular stint, and get some time for play. Later, in the early fifties, came shoe-binding for women and girls, and shoemaking for young men and boys. At that time, and for several years afterwards, there was a shoe-shop connected with nearly every house. Messrs. J. & S. Blake became shoe manufacturers, as did the Dudleys of Candia village. Haverhill took the lead in this industry. Shoe stock, with soles cut out by pattern, was sent to the shoemakers at their homes. Freighters made a business of taking the stock from the manufacturers at Haverhill, and returning the shoes. They brought the money to the shoemakers with a new lot of stock. All the shoes were then made by hand, as machinery for making shoes had not been invented. Nearly all the shoes were pegged, and were without heels. Some of the boys learned to make shoes so as to earn money to pay expenses when attending school out of town at the academy.

In the forties farming was the principal occupation, and it was done in the old-fashioned way. The seed was sowed or planted by hand. Then it was "the man and the hoe." The grass was cut with the scythe, and not with the mowing-machine. The men made long days, in the busy sea-

son beginning as soon as it was fairly light, and working as long as they could see. The work of the women was even more taxing than that of the men. Their work was never done. Was it strange that some of them gave up the struggle early? The boys did their part, dropping the corn, potatoes, and other seeds. They assisted in the hoeing, spread the hay, helped in raking, loaded the hay, or raked after the load, and stowed it away when it was being unloaded into the big mow or on the stuffy, heated scaffolds. They joined the reapers, and cut not only the tall, waving grain, but their own hands and legs with the sickle in trying to learn the business. They picked apples, cut stalks, helped husk the corn, and shelled it in the winter; picked up the stones in the fields, to be removed in carts; picked up potatoes after they were dug, drove the cows to pasture, and turned the grindstone. Sometimes they escaped the latter work in a unique way. There were tramps in those days, and the prince of hobos was Peter Varnum, a tall, stately, ragged specimen. He was too lazy to work, and wandered from town to town, sleeping in barns, and begging his food from house to house. Once in a while, after he had been given a breakfast, he was asked to turn the grindstone to grind a scythe. He did not like to refuse, but was careful afterwards to give such a place a wide berth, or hurry by as fast as he could go. Pete was a good-natured fellow, and of very respectable connections. It was said he had been a soldier in the war of 1812, and afterwards preferred to be a traveler instead of settling down.

Horses were not much used in farm work, but oxen were employed for plowing, drawing in hay, and for teaming generally. There were nearly one hundred yoke of oxen owned in town, and about as many yoke of steers being broken to work. Sometimes in winter, after a big storm, when the snow was deep and badly drifted, it was not uncommon to see ten or fifteen yoke of oxen attached to a big sled accompanied by several drivers and by men with shovels, breaking out the roads. It can readily be seen that it could not have been difficult to get together one hundred yoke

of oxen to move the town-meeting house from its original location at the geographical centre of the town, near Mr. Horatio Page's, to its present location at the Centre. Now I am told there are not a dozen yoke of cattle owned in town, horses having taken their places to a great extent.

It was not strange that out-of-door life and an abundance of work promoted health. In case of slight illness, our mothers and grandmothers knew the virtues of thoroughwort, catnip, sage, and other remedies supplied by nature. When severe sickness came, Dr. Stephen Gale, the only physician in town, was called. He was an excellent type of the old-time doctor. He was a scholarly, able man, thoroughly devoted to his profession, and is remembered as "the good physician." He drove in a gig, and carried saddle-bags containing his medicines, as was the custom of doctors then. Perhaps he administered too much calomel to his patients, and made too free a use of the lancet, but his death was regarded as a public misfortune.

There were two churches, the Congregational and Free-will Baptist. Dr. John C. Page was the Congregational minister. He was educated as a physician, but felt called to be a preacher, and studied at Gilmanton Theological Seminary, and was settled in Raymond in 1841, remaining until 1851. He was a man of ability, enthusiastic in his work, of commanding presence, of genial and courtly manners, and interested in everything tending to promote the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social development of his people and the town. With his old-fashioned clerical cloak he was a welcome visitor in every home. After the lamented death of Dr. Gale, in 1846, he served as physician until the arrival of Dr. Frye, a few months later.

Dr. Page's pastorate of ten years has only been surpassed in length of service by that of the present pastor, the Rev. Albert H. Thompson, who, as the secretary of the Old Home Week Association, has done so much to promote the success of these meetings, and who took the leading part in the arrangements for the church centennial of ten years ago, and in securing the money to build the new and beautiful

house for public worship to replace the old house destroyed by fire December 6, 1892.

Rev. Tobias Foss was the earliest Freewill Baptist minister I can remember. He was an intelligent, sincere man, and taught our district school one winter, in addition to his pastoral work. He was succeeded by the Rev. Joseph Fullonton, a native of the town, who was highly esteemed by his own people and by the entire town. Though of excellent natural endowments, scholarly attainments, and wide reading, Mr. Fullonton was very modest and retiring in his disposition, and because he lacked a college education he had a low estimate of himself and anything he undertook to do. It is but scant justice to say that his history of Raymond is one of the best town histories ever published, and that he has placed his native town under perpetual obligations.

Among the deacons of the Congregational Church was Deacon Daniel N. Lane, who filled that honored position for more than forty years in a very efficient manner, and also many places of responsibility in town affairs. He was a ready and effective speaker, and a very useful citizen. Deacon Daniel Tilton was a venerable, saintly man, who walked to meeting Sunday morning with his Bible under his arm, like one of the prophets of old. He had so strong a sense of his own unworthiness that in the prayer meetings he habitually called himself the greatest of sinners. Too much introspection had made him morbid. Alas! what would he have said if his associates had uttered *Amen* to his oft-repeated ejaculations!

Among the pillars of the Baptist Church was Deacon Amos Batchelder. He was a prudent, sagacious man of the world, and a devoted, earnest Christian. He did much to promote neighborhood religious meetings, and he seemed to enjoy greatly the traveling revivalists of those days, who generally had strong lungs. Of such a person he was accustomed to say, "He has the power." A favorite expression of his was, "He that is wise is wise for himself." He was fervent in exhortation and in prayer, and urged all to get aboard the ark of safety as it passed by. Perhaps that was the reason the

big carryall in which he drove to meeting Sundays was called by the boys "the ark."

The Methodist Church was organized in 1848, and the Sunday services were held, at first, in the old town-meeting house. The Rev. J. S. Loveland was the first minister. He was followed by the Rev. James Adams in 1849, and a house for public worship was built during that year.

As most of the people lived at a distance from the meeting-house, the Sunday services were held in the forenoon and in the afternoon, with sufficient time between for the Sunday school. The New England Primer was used for study, and we learned, among other things, "In Adam's fall we sinned all," and also "What is the chief end of man?" The intermission gave an opportunity for those not attending the Sunday school to get the current news, and the horse-shed class was a regular institution for some of the men. When the weather was favorable, there was usually a meeting Sunday evenings at the schoolhouses in turn "at early candle-lighting," when each head of a family was expected to bring a candle or oil lamp. There was generally a full house at these meetings.

In those days the greatest economy prevailed. It was not the custom for the towns or individuals to run into debt. Very few houses were clapboarded or painted, and there were not a dozen covered carriages or two-seated wagons in town. The old-style wagons with thoroughbraces were going out, and wagons with steel springs were coming in. Cooking-stoves were used in the winter, but the big fireplaces, with the old-fashioned cranes and pot-hooks and trammels, were preferred in the summer. The houses were generally of one story, with a big chimney in the center. There was usually a bed in every room, except in the kitchen, and sometimes in that. In the family sleeping-room there would be a trundle-bed for the small children. Few houses had a carpet, even in the best room.

Most of the schools were in session only eight weeks in the summer and six or eight weeks in the winter. There was a different teacher nearly every term. A man generally kept

school in the winter and a woman in the summer. The large boys, who went in the winter, devoted their time for the most part to ciphering. There was little classification, and it was "go as you please."

Mr. Jeremiah Page was among my early teachers. J. Norris Tilton, whose untimely death was so deeply lamented, Wilson S. Abbott, Robert Wallace, and others followed. Nearly all of them have passed on. Two of my honored teachers, Mrs. Gideon Currier and Mrs. Samuel Gove, to whom I am much indebted, are still residents of the town. Master Samuel M. Harriman made a greater impression on me than any other of my Raymond teachers. A man of exceptional ability and strong personality, he was earnest and enthusiastic in his work, and had great influence over his pupils. He was a terror to evil-doers, and was not always patient with dull pupils, but inspired others with a love of study and a desire to make the most of themselves. In after years he always gave his old pupils a warm greeting, and by his critical questions showed himself still the schoolmaster.

During my early school days it was expected that the boys who left the schoolroom when the school was in session would turn, face the school, and make a bow, and the girls make a courtesy, before passing out. Among the text-books used were "Emerson's First Part" in arithmetic, "Colburn's First Lessons," and "Adams's Arithmetic," "The New Hampshire Book," "Peter Parley's," and "Smith's Geography," and "Smith's Grammar."

Fifty years ago two things were lacking: first, schools that could be in session more than fourteen weeks a year; and second, readable books of interest to young people.

At the present day it seems sometimes as if the children are surfeited with school privileges and overwhelmed with books. The boys and girls of my generation in Raymond were for the most part eager to attend school, and when there they took up study with enthusiasm and energy. At home, they were, as previously stated, trained to work, and they learned those habits of industry and application to daily duties that have been of immense benefit to them in subse-

quent life. They were also expected to go to church and Sunday school, and they received that moral and spiritual instruction that has been so important and helpful in the development of the New England character.

There was then no town library, no school library, and no Sunday school library of any value. The books in the houses were mostly religious. The Bible was read at home and in school, and its quaint old stories were much enjoyed; but Baxter's "Saint's Rest," Brainerd's "Memoirs," and the biographies of Nathan W. Dickerman and Lucy Lothrop, both of whom were little saints and died young, did not appeal to the average boy. Some families took a religious paper, and some had the "New Hampshire *Patriot*," a paper devoted to the Democratic party and to the abuse of the Whigs. With much difficulty one borrowed Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Robinson Crusoe," and those books were like oases in the desert. How eagerly did the young people long for access to books that had practical, human interest, and for the opportunity to study something beyond arithmetic and geography.

It may be asked what amusements did we have, and what holidays and social gatherings there were at that time. Christmas was not observed very much. The descendants of the Pilgrims and the Puritans did not honor the day till later. New Year's had some recognition. No work was expected on Fast Day or Thanksgiving. On both of these days religious services were held in the churches. Thanksgiving was a day for family reunions and good cheer. Though most of the turkeys were sold to increase the family income, one was kept for that day, and plum pudding, mince pies, pumpkin pies, and other old-fashioned dishes loaded down the table. The big brick oven was very useful at that time. The Fourth of July was the only regular holiday. Then we went fishing, and had picnics, and tried to have a good time. Foot-ball and base-ball were not among our athletic sports. In the winter coasting was a favorite amusement for the boys and girls, and snowballing was enjoyed by the boys. The deep snows inter-

ferred with skating. There were some games, but card-playing and dancing were not approved in orthodox circles.

The singing-school was the social event of the winter for young people. In some respects the singing-teacher, with his violin, was a more important personage than the schoolmaster. He organized classes in every town, and the young people generally attended, bent quite as much on having a good time as to learn how to sing. Mr. Asa Poor distinguished himself as a teacher of singing-schools and as a violinist.

The town meetings were events of great attraction to the boys. They were held in March, in the old town-meeting house, with the big old-fashioned square pews and the high pulpit. It was a day of great interest to the men, and they were all there. It was a gala-day for the boys, and they took their first lessons in town affairs, and had a good time, buying and eating oranges, gingerbread, buns, and other good things.

Among the pleasant gatherings were the huskings, when the young people met evenings to husk the golden corn as it lay on the big floors of the barns. Often there was a persistent effort to find a red ear, as it entitled the finder to certain privileges. The evening's work and fun generally ended with an old-time supper. Then the corn was usually spread out on the capacious floors of the attic chamber to dry, though a little later corn-barns were in very general use. There were apple-bees, when the surplus apples were pared, quartered, and strung, then placed in the sun to dry, so they could be prepared for future use. There were fishing parties on rainy days, and sometimes at dusk, evenings, when the bites of the fish were outdone by the bites of the mosquitoes. There were quiltings, when the women of neighboring households assisted in making comforters and patchwork quilts for home use, and for the young ladies who were soon to start housekeeping for themselves in a new home.

I must not fail to mention the social teas of neighboring dames, when the hostess vied with future Delmonicos in showing how many courses she could set before her visitors. The

sewing-circles also brought the women together to sew for the poor, and for missionary work, and to exchange the latest news. There were no clubs for men or women, and no fraternal lodges in town, but there was a good deal of social activity in different ways.

The most interesting and important day of the year, in some respects, was the general muster in the early autumn, when the militia of Chester, Raymond, and Candia met on some capacious field to show the assembled multitudes their skill in military maneuvers. There were companies of artillery, cavalry, and infantry, some in fine uniforms, and others in their Sunday or every-day clothes, with the flint-locks their grandfathers had carried at Bunker Hill and other battle-fields of the Revolutionary War. The company without uniforms was sometimes called "the slam-bangs." The company of rifles, in green uniforms, was my especial admiration, and the company of artillery under Capt. David Griffin, afterwards promoted to major, gave a warlike aspect to things. The ladies were present in carriages and on foot. There was the largest attendance in the afternoon, when Major-General Henry Tucker of this town swept down the road with his brilliant staff, and came on to the field to review the troops. There was a great mass of people of all sorts and conditions gathered for an outing. There were side-shows innumerable, hawkers and peddlers, venders of articles warranted to be "long enough for any man and short enough for any boy." The discontinuance of the musters caused great disappointment to the boys.

While at work the men wore homespun in winter and blue jean in summer with top-boots of cowhide. These, however, were changed on Sundays for broadcloth, tall beaver hats and calf-skin boots. The dress-coat, made of blue broadcloth with brass buttons, was much worn on dress occasions, as was the high stock and dicky. At such times the ladies were equally stylishly dressed in their big coal-scuttle-shaped bonnets and fine gowns. They were careful not to expose their faces to the glare of the sun, but wore veils, and carried silk parasols. For an outside garment, the shawl was in

general use. At middle life, and afterwards, the ladies wore caps made of lace or other fine materials. The big sun-bonnet formed a picturesque part of the women's dress when about home.

In the forties nearly all the eatables were the product of the farm. There was an abundance of rye and corn, and some wheat. The potato-bug was unknown, and potatoes were raised in large quantities. In the early fifties flour could be bought by the barrel at a moderate price, and hot biscuit became a fad, and like pie, was eaten three times a day. When I was a small boy, at Thanksgiving and in the early winter we had fresh meat, but it was very scarce at other seasons of the year. There was an abundance of salt pork and salt fish. We had such fresh fish as we caught with hook and line.

According to my best information, the manner of life fifty or fifty-five years ago was very much like that at the beginning of the century. Money was frequently reckoned in shillings of New England currency, and the old silver fourpence and ninepence were still in circulation. There were plain living, plenty of work, and good outdoor air, and there were giants in physical strength. The men and women thrived on hard work, and did not want holidays nor outings, except a drive to Hampton or Salisbury beaches after the haying was done, when the whole family went to take a look at old ocean and to bathe in its briny waters.

At the time of which I speak, a stage-coach ran from Portsmouth to Concord, going up one day and back the next. Its route, after leaving the Centre, was over Long Hill. Sandy Martin was the driver, and he changed horses at Blake's tavern, an old-fashioned building standing about where Mrs. Elzada Bean's residence now is. The present house was built by Mr. Joseph Blake fifty years ago or more, and was occupied by him and his family for many years. At that time there were not more than eight or ten houses within a half-mile of the Centre, and yet the population was only about one hundred less than it now is. There was no central village, but the houses were scattered over the

town. The Portsmouth and Concord railroad was completed to Raymond Centre, so the cars ran September 9, 1850, and it was finished to Concord in 1852. After leaving Candia, its route was direct to Suncook and Concord; but in 1861, Manchester had become so important and prosperous a city that the location of the road was changed, the track was laid from Candia to Manchester, and the road from Candia to Suncook was discontinued.

The largest land-owner in town was Mr. Asa Currier, and the wealthiest citizens were undoubtedly 'Squire Joseph Blake and Col. Sherburne Blake. The Blake brothers kept a tavern in stage-coach days, as their father did before them, and for many years had the post-office under successive administrations. They had an extensive farm, and later became shoe manufacturers, doing a large business. They owned the principal store, which was located just west of where Mr. Charles Shepard's place now is. The only other store in town was kept by Mr. William P. Tufts. This was next above where the Baptist meeting-house stood, and is now occupied as a private residence. These stores were largely given to barter, or exchange of produce, and the sale of dry and West India goods.

It is now one hundred and thirty-seven years since Raymond was organized as a town, and forty years longer since the first settlers came here. Before the building of the railroad, and the more intimate connection with the outside world, the changes were slow, but since that time they have been more rapid. The eight or ten houses here at the Centre have increased to nearly one hundred, and the two stores to nearly twenty. Among the most important improvements that were made in the forties and early fifties was the building of new roads to avoid the hills and the straightening of old roads. In my early boyhood, in driving from Candia to Raymond Centre, it was necessary to take the old cider-ferry road, or the road past the Giles schoolhouse. After repeated efforts in town meetings, the road past Major Griffin's was built, the road from the Green, and the new road past Griffin's sawmill, to connect with

the Deerfield road, near the residence of the late Joseph Dudley, where the Healeys now live, so as to avoid Long Hill. The expense of lawsuits in fighting the roads, and the cost of finally making them, proved a heavy burden to the town; but the public was much benefited by the improvements.

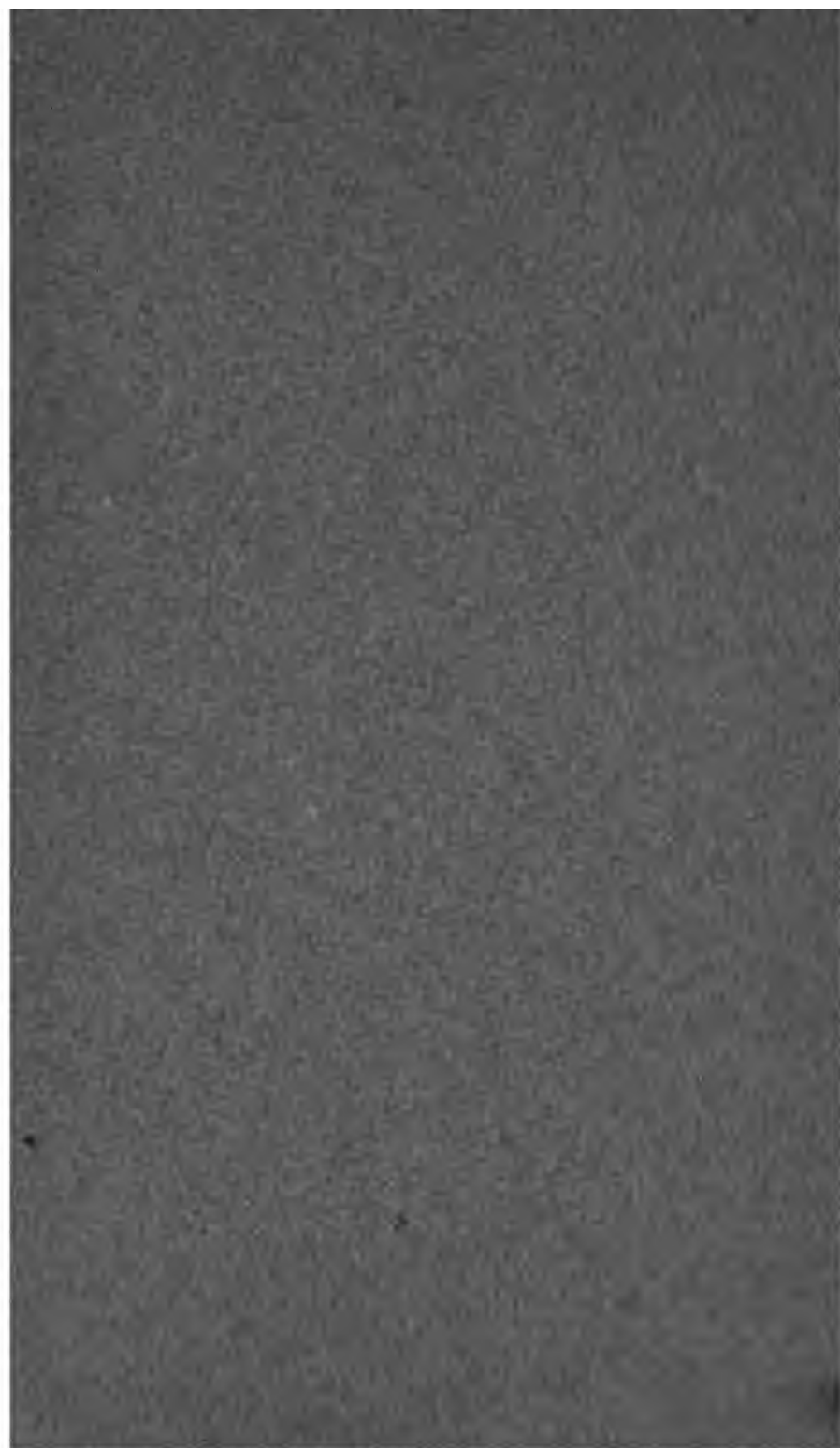
Strange to say, the devastating fire of nine years ago seems to have been a blessing in disguise, for new and greatly improved church edifices, a new and more commodious railroad station, and new, more convenient, and more attractive stores have sprung up phoenix-like from the flames. The old has passed away, and Raymond Centre has taken her place, with a new equipment, and with nearly all the modern improvements.

I rejoice to see the prosperity that has come to the old town. And yet, as I look at these changes, a feeling of sadness comes over me. I do not feel at home here. I do not feel at home in this church, beautiful as it is. It is only as I get away from the Centre that things begin to look familiar. But when I visit the old homes I look in vain for the former occupants. Nearly all of the generation which was carrying the burdens and assuming the responsibilities of life when I was a boy have passed away. The fields they cultivated and improved, the roads they built, many of the trees they planted, are still there. The stone walls remain as monuments to their industry. A few of the picturesque old well-sweeps, with the old oaken buckets, still stand guard over the ancient wells.

In a few cases the farms are deserted, the fields have become pastures, and the pastures woodlands. I see, however, the same varied and beautiful landscape. The flowing rivers and the quiet, familiar ponds are in the same locations, fringed with the green meadows as of old. Pawtuckaway still crowns the landscape. I see evidences of thrift and enterprise everywhere. A new generation is in charge. The lands are better cultivated, there is greater variety of fruit, large and small, the houses are more attractive, the homes more beautiful, the barns are better adapted

to their purposes, the highways are greatly improved, and the general appearance of things made more attractive. Manufacturing has come in to give a greater variety of occupations, and to promote the general prosperity in many ways. The schools have longer terms, are better graded, and the teachers are more permanent. A free public library has been started, and receives the support of the town. But the fathers and mothers of my boyhood are gone. Though my generation is at the front, it appears in broken ranks. Some have gone to other towns and cities, and have become identified with other interests. Some who remained in the old homes have done their work, and have gone over to the majority. Many fell in the Civil War, in that terrible struggle to save the Union. Some, who did not shoulder a musket or carry a knapsack, lost their lives in the same cause. We shall never forget their patriotism and their heroic deeds. We will ever honor their memory, and hold the precious lives of all the departed in everlasting remembrance.

Mr. President, ladies, and gentlemen, let us again pledge our loyalty to this dear old town. May it ever stand for good morals, temperance, education, good citizenship, and a noble, self-sacrificing public spirit. May we ever be true to its best traditions, and imitate the high ideals, the sturdy honesty, and devotion to duty shown by the fathers and mothers who have made the town what it is.







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